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Jacob Nimeh
Kyle Shaak MPH
Beth Careyva M.D.
Grant M. Greenberg M.D., M.H.S.A., M.A.

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The Impacts on Visit Types in Family Medicine Pre- and Post- COVID-19

Jacob Nimeh, Kyle Shaak MPH, Beth Careyva M.D, Grant Greenberg M.D, MA, MHSA
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pennsylvania

Background

• Telemedicine technology has been available for over a decade but has had limited uptake in healthcare until the COVID-19 pandemic.
• Within weeks during the pandemic, LVHN was able to almost entirely function using only telemedicine across a wide variety of specialties, including family medicine.

Methods

• Conducted a literature review of medical journals and public articles related to family medicine and the COVID-19 pandemic.
  – Evaluated the journals in depth to collect information on the use of telemedicine in family medicine before, during, and in the recovery stages of COVID-19.
• Collected electronic data from Epic EMR and queried. The data was then analyzed using Microsoft Excel software.
• The data was analyzed for descriptive statistics using Excel features to compare visit types and frequencies for the most common diagnoses.
  – All LVPG family medicine patients were included from 3/11/19-6/30/19 and 3/11/20-6/30/20.
  – Diagnoses included are hypothyroidism, sinusitis, hypertension, back pain, hyperlipidemia, diabetes, cough, upper respiratory infections, anxiety and depression, and routine checkups.

Results

• Figure 1 demonstrates the total number of office visits decreased for April but then steadily increased through May and June.
• The only diagnosis that had more office visits in 2020 compared to 2019 was general wellness examinations.
• During the COVID-19 pandemic, telemedicine techniques were implemented and used the most during the month of April.
• Telemedicine was used across all of the most common visit types, though was utilized more for chronic illness care than wellness exams.

Conclusions

• Figure 1 demonstrates the total number of office visits decreased for April but then steadily increased through May and June.
• The only diagnosis that had more office visits in 2020 compared to 2019 was general wellness examinations.
• During the COVID-19 pandemic, telemedicine techniques were implemented and used the most during the month of April.
• Telemedicine was used across all of the most common visit types, though was utilized more for chronic illness care than wellness exams.

Future Directions

• Analyze data for all billing codes under each primary diagnosis.
• Ascertain telemedicine trends in other medical specialties including surgical and procedural visits.
• Compare visit type frequencies with demographic variables including age.

References:
• Finley, Caitlin R et al. "What are the most common conditions in primary care? Systematic review." Canadian family physician Medecin de famille canadien vol. 64,11 (2018): 832-840.